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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wellesley Freedom Team Formed to Address Incidents of Hate and Bias

March 30, 2021 (Wellesley, MA) – A group of volunteers in Wellesley have developed a non-partisan, community-based initiative to support residents who feel victimized by racism and bias and to respond to such incidents in our town. The newly-formed Wellesley Freedom Team was established in response to reports from residents who experienced incidents of racism and bias that are not defined as hate crimes, and therefore, cannot be addressed under the law. The Freedom Team aims to provide a confidential and respectful space to air concerns and to help develop actionable next steps to resolve situations for victims.

The Freedom Team is reactive, proactive, and retroactive. Members include community leaders, educators, and faith leaders, with the support of Town officials. The team's intent is to respond with urgency whenever members become aware of individuals who experience threats, harassment, or violence related to race, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, or class. The Freedom Team will be available to discuss past and current incidents, as well as fears of future victimization, and will offer both victims and witnesses a listening ear, support, recourse, and/or opportunity for reconciliation.

"We heard about the Freedom Team founded by Jamele Adams with the support of Natick Chief of Police James Hicks and were inspired to explore forming a Wellesley team. Volunteer leaders have really stepped up to organize this effort to support residents who have experienced racism and bias," said Meghan Jop, Wellesley's Executive Director of Government Services.

Residents of Wellesley are encouraged to contact the Freedom Team if they experience or witness bias-motivated threats, harassment, or violence. All calls and emails will remain confidential, discussed only by members of the Team.

To contact the Freedom Team:

- **Hotline:** 339-216-0124
- **Email:** WellesleyFreedomTeam@gmail.com

Residents who fear for their safety should call 911 immediately.

When a message is left on the Freedom Team hotline, or an email is sent, callers should expect a response within 12 hours. A Freedom Team member will offer a telephone, virtual, or in-person meeting to assist the victim.

If an incident constitutes a hate crime, the Freedom Team will connect victims to the Wellesley Police Department. Hate crimes include bias-motivated assault, battery, and property damage.

The work of the Freedom Team is in partnership with Human Relations Service (HRS), the Wellesley Police Department, and the Wellesley Select Board.

The Wellesley Freedom Team is part of the Freedom Team Network, which includes the Natick Freedom Team, Waltham Freedom Team, Hopkinton Freedom Team, and Franklin Freedom Team.

Freedom Team members include: Julie Blazar, Director of Communications and Outreach for OUT MetroWest; Amy Frigulietti, Wellesley Assistant Executive Director; Ally Jin, Resident and Treasurer/Director of Wellesley Chinese American Language School; Meghan Jop, Wellesley Executive Director; Elaine Mittell, Resident, Social Work Consultant, and Member of World of Wellesley (WOW) Anti-racism Activism Committee; Tendai Musikavanhu, Resident; Lise Olney, Resident and Select Board Vice Chair; Chief Jack Pilecki, Wellesley Police; Haihong Li, Resident, Principal of Wellesley Chinese American Language School, and Founder of Garden of Harmony; Shengili Li, Resident, Founder of Wellesley Chinese American Network (WECAN), and member of the New England Chinese American Alliance; Rabbi Rachel Saphire -Temple Beth Elohim; Dr. Donna Stoddard, Resident, Interim Associate Dean of Faculty, and Associate Professor and Chair of the Operations and Information Management Division at Babson College; Dr. Allan Wyatt, Psy.D., Chief Psychologist at Human Relations Service (HRS).

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